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THE CHURCH AND THE CHANGING ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL ORDER

International Missionary Council  
156 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N.Y.





THE CHURCH AND THE CHANGING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ORDER

REPORT OF A COMMISSION IN PREPARATION FOR

THE MADRAS MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

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This Commission was appointed in 1937 by the Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America planning for its contribution to the Madras Meeting. It was requested to study the situation in North America and make available the results of its study. At a number of Commission meetings papers were presented and the following report is the result of papers prepared by the members starred in the list given below.

Commission Members

Chairman: Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert\*

Rev. Roswell Barnes  
Prof. John C. Bennett  
Dr. Paul Braisted  
Dr. Allan K. Chalmers  
Rev. Mark A. Dawber  
Dr. R.E. Diffendorfer  
Rev. Martin Harvey  
Dr. David W. Henry  
Mr. E. K. Higdon  
Mr. Frank A. Horno

Dr. F. Ernest Johnson\*  
Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones  
Dr. Benson Y. Landis\*  
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Rev. A. J. Muste\*  
Dr. James Myers  
Dr. Richard Niebuhr\*  
Mr. John H. Roisner\*  
Miss Elsie Rodgers  
(rep. C.J.T.)

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Miss Florence G. Tylor  
Dr. A. L. Warnshuis  
Rev. L. Bradford Young

International Missionary Council  
156 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N.Y.

# THE CHURCH AND THE CHANGING SCENE IN THE MODERN WORLD

## REPORT OF A COMMISSION TO PREPARE FOR

### THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

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This Commission was appointed in 1937 by the Committee of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America planning for its convention at the National Meeting. It was requested to study the situation in North America and make available the results of its study. As a result of Commission meetings papers were presented and the following report is the result of papers prepared by the various members in the field before.

#### Commission Members

Chairman: Dr. Samuel McGraw, Chicago

Dr. Robert W. Benson	Dr. F. Ernest Johnson	Rev. Harold Benson
Dr. James A. Benson	Dr. Thomas Jones	Prof. John C. Bontrich
Miss Esther S. Benson	Dr. Hanson Y. Lander	Dr. Paul Bruch
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Dr. Channing Johnson	Dr. Lucille A. Moss	Rev. Mark A. Gamm
Dr. Charles A. Jones	Rev. A. J. Mott	Dr. E. E. Gifford
Miss Florence S. Tyler	Dr. James Myers	Rev. Martin Harvey
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Rev. L. Brockway Young	Dr. John E. Robinson	Dr. E. E. Hight
	Miss Elsie Rogers	Dr. Frank A. Hove
	(Rep. G. A. T.)	

International Lutheran Council  
125 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.



## CONTENTS

- I. The Social Significance of Christianity
- II. The Function of the Church with Reference to the Social Order
- III. The Relation of the Church to Social Problems in America Today
  1. The Church and the Community
  2. Church and Community in Relation to Education
  3. The Church and the Family
  4. The Church and the Politico-Economic Situation
  5. The Church and Cooperatives - *not of print - not included*
- IV. The Significance of the American Experience for the Younger Churches.

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## THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIANITY

The question about the social significance of Christianity may be put in two ways. One may ask, What meaning has Christianity from the point of view of human society? Or one may inquire, What value can society find in itself when it accepts the gospel? The former question invites the evaluation of Christianity by standards which are not its own; it implies the surrender of the independence of the Christian faith; it suggests that an effort should be made to justify the gospel to the world because of its social utility. Such an effort is parallel with the attempt to recommend Christianity to individuals because it will give them happiness, long life, or prosperity. It represents a perversion, therefore, of the fundamental truth that all these "other things" are added to those who seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness, but that to seek after them is to follow in the way of the Gentiles and to lose life by making it its own end.

The other form of the inquiry, however, is as legitimate as it is necessary. It is necessary because historical processes have brought men to a time of highly developed social consciousness, when they are manifestly concerned about the meaning and destiny of their communities and when many secular philosophies threaten to attach a dangerous meaning to this social life. It is legitimate because there is nothing in creation which does not come under the judgment of God as manifest in Jesus Christ, and there is nothing which may be deemed irrelevant to His purposes.

Protestant Christianity is particularly warned by the time to deal seriously with the problem of social life, for this form of the Christian faith has been associated throughout its history with the individualism of the modern period. In sectarian Protestantism and in the movements which stem from the Methodist-Pietist-Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century individualism has been even more pronounced than in the churches which took their rise in the work of Luther, Calvin and the English Reformers. Such Christian individualism has stressed the divine love for each individual human soul, the individual character of sin and guilt, the necessity for personal decision for Christ, acceptance of him as personal Savior, and the importance of internal, subjective experiences of communion with God. It has tended to regard the church as the company of the converted rather than as the body of Christ, as something like a contract society into which men enter one by one for purposes of mutual edification and the prosecution of common tasks rather than as a community prior in many ways to its members. Insofar as the missionary enterprise of the last hundred and fifty years has been largely a result of the Evangelical awakening the new churches founded by it have probably received a larger share of the individualistic emphasis than fell to the lot of those Christian communities in which an older orientation continued to modify the new spirit. Even so, the Protestant churches of an earlier birth have also tended toward a greater measure of individualism than have the Catholic communities. Hence the latter seem often to be in closer touch with the collectivistic spirit of the twentieth century than the former.

It would be manifestly unjust to deride or to reject the views of salvation and church which Pietism and Evangelicalism have fostered or to blame Protestantism for the rise of the temper of private judgment and the doctrine of the autonomy of the self. Both movements are essentially concerned with the gospel rather than with individualism and even their tendency in the latter direction is historically intelligible as a reaction to Catholic







ecclesiasticism and as the result of an effort to preach the word of God to the men of an individualistic time. Yet it cannot be denied that, directly or indirectly, both orthodox and Pietistic Protestantism have been closely associated with the rise and development of secular individualism in modern civilization, and that at times they have fallen prey to its fallacies.

Secular individualism abstracts man from his relation to God as well as from his dependence upon the human community. It assigns intrinsic value to the personal life. In philosophy it makes the self the starting point of all knowledge of the world; in ethics it makes the individual's desire for happiness or his urge toward self-realization the standard of judgment. Practically it expresses itself in economic capitalism for which self-interest is the first law of life and the social good a mere by-product of the unlimited desire for private profit. In politics the independent individual becomes the starting point of administrators as well as of philosophers. His so-called self-evident rights are placed ahead of the rights of the community and the latter is essentially regarded as a contract organization, founded not in nature or in God's will but in the wishes of individuals who seek a working compromise for the sake of satisfying their often conflicting claims. It is not a true community but an association whose ends need to be defined in terms of individual self-realization or happiness. The religion which this movement of life and thought develops is both individualistic and humanistic. Its real object of worship is personality while God is sometimes postulated as necessary in order that the value of personal life may be guaranteed in face of the attacks of an impersonal world. Frequently this religion is syncretized with elements of Christianity, but its starting point and goal is neither God nor the community; it is the individual with his religious capacities and aspirations.

This secular individualism has entered into a double crisis. Upon the one hand its assumption has been challenged. A deep scepticism has attacked the dogma of the intrinsic value of the individual. Upon what basis, it is asked, can this value be established? That which is used as the measure of all other values is itself subject to question. And does not the assertion of the value of the personal life rest upon the universal tendency of all things to make themselves centers of the universe? But even this scepticism has been suggested and fortified by the other aspect of the crisis of individualism. Great assumptions are called into question when their consequences become intolerable. And the consequences of the faith in the individual as the source and end of life have been highly disappointing to men. Wars, political and economic crises, the unhappiness of men in conflict with themselves and each other--these have made it clear that individualism is self-defeating, that when the individual seeks his life he loses it and that the greatest enemy of personal life is personal life which has made itself absolute. In economics the system of compromises and contracts by which the interests of private selves may have been tolerably well satisfied in an earlier day has broken down; periods of unemployment and poverty, the misfortunes of agrarian workers in competition with industry, increased political tensions and wars between the countries in which capitalism has flourished, the wastage of natural resources, the loss of meaning in the work of the industrial laborer--these and other evils have called the value of the whole system of private profit enterprise into question. Moreover the use of the state by powerful economic associations and the conflict of interest groups in the political life, resulting sometimes in the paralysis of government and always in much internal friction, have raised great doubts as to the adequacy of individualistic political theories and constructions. Doubtless many of the evils under which men suffer today must be traced to more fundamental







causes than individualism supplies, yet the difficulties and pains which this view of life and this ethics have brought are sufficiently palpable to call forth a great reaction.

That reaction has taken the form of an ethics, a politics, an economic system, a philosophy and a religion in which the intrinsically valuable community takes the place of the intrinsically valuable individual. It is the beginning and the end; for it the individual is to live, labor, love and die. For its sake science is to be carried on, industry to be developed, families to be founded, religious cults to be engaged in. Whether the community be defined in terms of class, race, nation, or culture is of secondary importance, just as it was of secondary significance in the case of individualism whether the individual was conceived in idealistic or materialistic, his ethics in spiritualistic or hedonistic, terms. The expressions of this new temper are confused and various, but the general basis and direction are unmistakable. Even in parts of the earth where explicitly communal religions and philosophies of life have not been widely accepted a new consciousness of the common life, a new interest in the common destiny, a new communal will-to-live and will-to-power are making themselves manifest. The greater the danger to the common life the greater the consciousness of its importance. Thus Christianity is confronted with the problem of preaching the gospel to a world in which individualism may be dying but in which a new orientation is rapidly developing.

It seems insufficient for the church to approach its task with that individualistic type of proclamation which it developed under the stress of an earlier crisis. Its temptation to do so is doubtless great. The communal view and practice involve such evident cruelties to individuals and such conflicts between societies that the cruelties and conflicts of individualism, now familiar, seem pale by comparison. Moreover whatever may be said about the tendency to make the individual absolute it remains true that according to the gospel he is God's creature, for whom Christ died, and all treatment of personal life as though it were merely a means to other finite ends, though they be those of the state, must call forth protest from believers in the gospel. The communal view of life has expressed itself also in such patently idolatrous fashion, that monotheism is bound to reject its pretensions and to announce its doom. Finally, it may be maintained <sup>that</sup> the failures of individualism in the political, economic and cultural life are due not to the fact that individuals were exalted above communities but were made absolute. Hence Christian individualism may attempt to meet the new problem by seeking to correct secular individualism and by resisting the whole trend toward collectivistic views of life. The danger remains, however, that it will think of the individual self as somehow nearer to God than the community is, that it will interpret God not through Jesus Christ but through personalistic philosophy and ethics and that it will identify Christianity somewhat more with the individualistic forms of life, such as democracy in politics and private enterprise in economics, than with the new forms. The tendency then would be to pit one temporal institution against another and to lose the gospel in a new type of legalism, not dissimilar to the legalism of a Roman Catholicism which exalts medieval institutions as more Christian than modern ones.

It appears to be more in keeping with the gospel that the divine judgment and grace be preached to men in the situation in which they actually find themselves and that against the doctrine of the intrinsically valuable society there be set neither a secular nor a Christian individualism but rather the proclamation of the sovereignty of the creating, judging and redeeming God.





Communities exist as individuals exist; now they are conscious of themselves and of their neighbor communities as rarely before in human history. What shall Christianity say to them save this, that they are wholly dependent on God for their being, subject to his judgement, lost without his salvation, that they have no worth save that which he gives them?

Christianity, it is true, does not come to a community with an assurance of its worth to God, but rather with the message of his judgment upon it. Yet judgment and salvation imply creation and creation means in the case of communities, as of individuals and any other beings, that they are not self-made nor self-dependent but rather the products of the divine will which brought them forth out of nothing and sustains them daily from falling back into nothingness. It means also that they are sacred, not intrinsically good, but to be loved because God has made them, to be loved in God and not in themselves, nor in any other finite being. Just as body and spirit, animal and human life, are to be valued not for their own sakes nor for each others' sakes but for God's sake, so it may be said of each community that it has direct relation to God and is to be accounted valuable in him. But as the principle of the sacredness of personality applies to the neighbor at the same time as it applies to the self, so the principle of the sacredness of communities applies to neighbor communities as directly as to one's own. The love of the neighbor as the self is a commandment laid upon communities no less than upon individuals.

Yet though this doctrine of creation be the foundation of the Christian teaching about the value of communities the practical beginning of the gospel proclamation to them must be, as has been indicated, the announcement of God's judgment. The sacred community has become the sinful community; that which was meant to be the object of his love has turned away from him so that in his holy eyes it must be regarded as worthy of destruction. The universality and wretchedness of sin are perhaps more evident to men today in the case of societies than of persons. In them the love of self and the contempt of God, the will to self-exaltation, the rebellion against the Creator, pride, the lust of power, the use of others as means to selfish ends has reached heights so plainly visible that the justice of a wrath which condemns them to destruction is patent. There is no nation or class or race or other community which, looking upon the manifold injustice and transgression in which it was conceived, by which it lives, and by which it inflicts suffering upon the innocent, can do otherwise than acknowledge as righteous the doom which it suffers or which has been pronounced upon it. Such judgment appears in the internal and external crises of communal life, in the conflicts within it, whether they be those of classes or of races, in the emptiness of a cultural life that feeds upon itself, in the decline and death of nations and civilizations. No doctrine of the immortality of civilization, such as was presented in the idea of continual progress, or of the perpetuity of nations, such as modern nationalisms seem to maintain, can overcome the knowledge of the certainty of death nor can any propaganda about communal virtues erase from the minds of the enlightened the conviction that death is well-deserved. In the blindness of their sin communities fear each other and not the one great Judge who presses upon them through each other. It is the function of the Christian church to follow in the train of the prophets and its Master and to proclaim that the judgment is divine. It is true of course that the church remains under obligation to preach the same message of the judgment to individuals. But the significance of Christianity for societies does not lie merely in the





fact that it convicts its individual members of sin; it lies rather in the fact that it calls the community as a whole and the communal will in each member to whole hearted repentance.

The preaching of the community's "disvalue" to God is no more than the reverse side of the proclamation of salvation. The Christ of the church is the Savior of the world; one cannot confine his ministry to souls in the world, as though bodies did not participate in the benefits of his work; neither may one limit his grace to individuals as though communities were beyond the reach of his redeeming love. Whatever be the possibilities hidden in their future, present repentance and faith in God may give to the families of men an assurance of salvation which will not be at the mercy of the events of history. Many men, including many Christians, conceive it to be impossible that a community should so repent, so live by faith, so enter into the communion of the church. But by the same token it is impossible that individuals should repent and live by faith. "This world will not believe a man repents, and this wise world of ours is mostly right". Yet the gospel message is not a revelation of human but of divine possibilities; what is impossible to men is possible to God; the gift of repentance cannot be limited to individuals because they seem more ready to receive it than nations, classes and races do. Moreover the distinction between individual and society cannot be pressed, for no individual can repent and believe save in society, and social repentance means that society in the individual--his soul as it is tied together with other souls in living unity--turns from its sin to trust in God. The message of the church remains the same, no matter who the human subject is to whom it is addressed. That in this message God's word may be heard by communities which have come to the point of despair the ancient Israel of the prophet's time gives evidence. Only a remnant may be converted, but that remnant is the seed of the new life.

The issue then of our first argument is this, that while Christianity must assign far less than absolute value to human communities, it can give them the basis for a true evaluation of themselves. It can give them hope even while it disillusiones them of the false pride which lures them to destruction. Apart from such a foundation it is difficult to see how any stable worth could be attached to communal life or how it might be saved from the futility, conflict and cruelty to which its worship of itself condemns it. The message of the cross is socially significant in the widest sense of that word; it bestows meaning where otherwise there would be only ultimate meaninglessness; it delivers from the fear and the reality of death; it invites the nations to enter into the great revolution in which they will find their lives by the losing of life.

It may be well to state explicitly in conclusion of this section that there is no intention in anything said above to assert that the church must preach the value of the communal life as against the worth of the individual life. That would be no less grievous an error than the opposite statement. It is axiomatic that Christianity has taught men a high regard for personality; it should be equally axiomatic that it teaches a high regard for community. Our faith is not concerned to measure any finite good by any other finite good, to maintain the superiority of spirit to body, or of mind to matter, or of community to individuality. It is concerned to call men to repentance and faith in their spiritual and in their physical life, in their social and their personal existence. Wherever we are there the gospel meets us. If today we are in the midst of a strong communal life, the word of the cross comes to us there, bringing low our pride, revealing our sin, exorcising our social demons, and bringing glad tidings of peace.





## II

The question about the social significance of Christianity is widely taken to refer to a different inquiry than the one which we have been making. It is the conviction of many Christians today that the churches and their members have too often neglected the tasks of social betterment, of warfare against social evils, of the practical love of neighbor in the **fashion** which modern civilization requires. Our religion, it is said, has tended far too much toward spiritualism and other-worldliness, neglecting the ministry to men's bodies and to the temporal life; its adherents have too often confined themselves to religious works, seeking by them to merit salvation; their practice of brotherly love has followed the patterns of a simpler day when relations between men were more direct and before they were put at the mercy of great impersonal institutions.

The charge may be made even stronger, for it may be maintained that Christianity has assisted in the rise of such impersonal systems as modern industrial capitalism and militarism represent, partly through its neglect of the affairs of the present world, partly through more direct encouragement. Thus it has been pointed out that Calvinism has played no small part in the advancement of capitalism while Pietism has been associated with the rise of modern western nationalism. Now, this school of thought and action proceeds to say, the desperate situation of men in a world which has garnered the fruits of such neglect and sin calls for an energetic Christian activity which will endeavor to eradicate the major social evils, ameliorate the conditions of temporal life, provide for greater justice in intra- and inter-communal affairs. Such activity will be negative in its denunciation, with the prophets, of that grinding into the dust of the faces of the poor which is an evident feature of our life; it will be positive in its attempt to construct institutions, and laws which will serve the welfare of all. Sometimes co-operative economic societies, sometimes socialism, sometimes political democracy, sometimes more radical forms of social life may be regarded as the fit ends of Christian activity. At all events this view insists that Christianity is socially significant because it demands realistic love of neighbor, action designed under contemporary conditions to bring real relief from distress.

The general movement so described is based on various and sometimes conflicting theologies or so called "philosophies of social action". And the ultimate consequences of the movement vary with these differences, for actions differ in their results not only because of their immediate content but also because of the spirit in which they are performed. Often the basis of the social program is the simple and inescapable commandment of the love of neighbor. The humanitarian work which has been developed by many churches in the way of so called "social service" and in foreign missionary movements with their hospitals and schools has usually been carried on under this unassailable principle without any sacrifice of the fundamental work of evangelism. But at other times, and sometimes in confused mixture with the principle of love, the call for the social "application" of Christianity has been based upon a form of this-worldliness no less strange to the New Testament gospel than the spiritual other-worldliness which it criticizes. In this view the kingdom of God has been identified with an ideal state of human society which men are to attain by their own efforts while the faith in the living God has been reduced to belief in a kindly universal fatherliness. The note of redemption has been eliminated and the idea of progress has been substituted for judgment and





salvation. The conviction that all life is lived under the law of sin and death is lost in such a moralistic gospel of self-help, and men of good-will take the place of the Son of God as agents of salvation. It is not surprising that such an interpretation of Christianity should lead to a new division of men into good and bad, to a new self-righteousness, and to the frequent identification of Christianity with whatever party of democrats, nationalists, communists or socialists the individual regards as right. It must be added, of course, that no Christians are able by means of "correct" theology to guard themselves against the danger of Pharisaism, yet the moralism of this humanistic social religion seems particularly bound in this direction.

The teaching about social duty which it is necessary to set forth on the basis of a theology of redemption from sin through Jesus Christ must be in direct opposition to the latter interpretation, though it will have much in common with the humanitarianism based upon the love of the neighbor. The "duty" of the Christian, it must affirm, is to bring forth the fruits of repentance as a social being. Since society has sinned in him as he has sinned in society repentance will need to show itself in his social actions. He will repent not merely as a man but as a member of the white race and the white race in him will repent. The racial pride in him will be brought low and his humility will appear in his relations and in the relations of his race with other races. Social repentance will be repentance of the class-man, who is never a mere private person but one who lives by and in his class, sins with his class and lets his class sin in and through him. True social repentance will make a class ready to give up its prized position and to receive as a just act of divine judgment and discipline the event by which another class is raised to power. Social repentance will also be evident in the works of nations and of men as nationals. No repentance is ever complete, but surely it is a very feeble thing when it shows its fruits only in the narrowest and most personal relations of men.

Upon the other hand the social duty of Christians is to be defined in terms of the works of faith. Again one is tempted to say that while men may be able to trust God for themselves they cannot do so for their communities, and communities as a whole cannot do so at all. While in the face of their own death men may commit their souls to God without fear, too great a strain is placed upon their confidence in His mercy when they are asked to trust Him in the face of the decline of their nations. And again it must be replied that faith like repentance is the gift of God, that we are dealing with divine rather than with human possibilities. Lack of faith in God's mercy upon one's family, nation or other community shows itself simply as lack of faith, not as lack of a particular kind of trust. To bring forth the fruits of faith in the communal life will mean then that communities and men in communities will live with confidence in him rather than with trust in their economic resources, their military strength, their established position. It will mean that the desperate effort of societies to justify themselves by demeaning their rivals, and by seeking to impress others with their strength or goodness will be abandoned. From this point of view it becomes plain how much of our social conflict and cruelty is based upon our communal doubt of God and our consequent fear of each other.





It is not within the province of Christian ethics or theology to specify what particular forms such social Christian repentance and faith must take. The forms which became customary in a time of individualism are evidently inadequate today and the effort to confine ourselves to them often seems to be a device for escaping true repentance or a demonstration of the littleness of faith. To many Christians faith in God will require the acceptance of an absolutely pacifist position; yet to others, no less sincere, repentant and faithful political measures of another sort seem to be required. Christianity remains a gospel which can never be stated in terms of law; its kingdom remains a transcendent hope never to be translated into the relative forms of a world which awaits its redemption. Its social significance resides in no particular constitutions which it can give to men, but in the constant action of its salt and light, whereby the sinful world is preserved from utter destruction and guided over anew to its fulfillment in the glory of God.

Madras 211





## THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH WITH REFERENCE TO THE SOCIAL ORDER

The basic function of the Church is always to make known the truth concerning the nature and purpose of life as revealed in Christ. Since the will of God has to do with every phase of our existence, the Church must have a concern for all human activities and relationships, including the life of the family and of the community, the attitudes of national and racial groups to each other, the conduct of commercial and industrial and political affairs. Since the redemption through Christ is a redemption of man's entire life, His Church cannot limit its work to any narrow circle of the private interests of individuals. Unless the Christian faith can be seen as relevant to all the pressing problems of the common life, it will never seem to afford the full salvation which men need or to be vital to their actual living in the world. The Church is therefore inevitably constrained to enter as deeply as possible into the whole struggle of mankind and to seek ways of living together which are in accord with Christ's revelation of the Kingdom of God.

Even those who put the emphasis on the fact that in the Biblical view the Kingdom is not a human enterprise but the gift and creation of God must agree that the Bible likewise teaches that it has pleased God to choose men to be the instruments of His purpose and that He waits on their response in faith and obedience. The Church therefore can never forego the effort to formulate a social ethic which will be a true manifestation of its own faith in a sovereign and redeeming God. This it must do without at the same time becoming so absorbed in this-worldly interests as to lose its witness to the Kingdom of God as transcending the earthly scene and the temporal order.

The commendable desire of the Church to enter helpfully into the life of the world means that the dividing line between the Church and world is easily blurred. The Church is always in danger of becoming so much a part of secular civilization that it loses its power to challenge that civilization with the Gospel. If the Church becomes so much at home in society as to be merely an expression of contemporary social idealism and culture, it has nothing distinctive to say to society. The Church can be an effective critic of society only as it has a vivid sense of a loyalty that transcends society - only as it knows itself to have a mission to society derived from the revelation which God has given in Christ as to what the character of human life should be.

The chief end of man is to glorify God by living according to the standards of His Kingdom. This involves love of our neighbors as included with us in the Divine purpose and as created in the image of God. The image of God in man is so defaced by sin that his worth and dignity are obscured but it is the Christian faith that it is God's will to restore that dignity through the redemption that is in Christ. It is the Christian's obligation, therefore, as a part of his duty to God, to love his neighbor even when the neighbor does not seem, on his own merits, to deserve respect. We love our neighbors not merely because we like them but because God loves them and wills to redeem them. Even though complete love is not attainable in a world which is in many ways in conflict with God's will, it is always the duty of the Christian to discover and to follow the best available means and methods for increasing the possibilities of love in a sinful world. Although no social system can be identified with the Kingdom of God, which is always infinitely greater than any scheme of man's devising, the commandment of love is the absolute standard by which all human relationships and social arrangements must be judged.





## The Social Nature of the Individual

Moreover, the individual to whom the Church addresses its Gospel is never an isolated unit. He is "always enmeshed in a web of organic corporate relationships which surround his life in concentric circles of ever-widening radius - his family, his neighborhood, his race, his people, his nation, his humanity." Each of those relationships conditions and molds his attitudes, his thought, his conduct. Each is, in some sense, a part of the Divine order, part of God's gracious provision for man's life. But each tends also to impel the Christian to lines of action which are at variance with his duty to God. For both these reasons, the character and quality of these social groupings and institutional frameworks can never be a matter of indifference to the Church.

The most intimate and meaningful of these social groupings is the family. It is the basic social institution because to it every person owes his very existence and all his early opportunities. It is also the principal agency for the nurture of the young in Christian faith and life. What happens to the family is, therefore, of immense consequence for the Church. Where the home is weakened by the loosening of marital ties, by the disintegration of a sense of social responsibility, by economic conditions which force both parents out of the home or by housing which does not permit needful privacy or healthful environment, by unemployment which dooms the family to grinding poverty, the Church is necessarily concerned. To secure for the family such conditions as permit and encourage it to be the center of Christian fellowship and Christian living is an essential social function of the Church. Yet even the family, in spite of its unique place in the Divine plan, must be viewed as limited in the allegiance which it may claim of the individual; times come when we must recall Jesus' injunction that to be His disciple may require one to forsake father and mother.

Next to the family in its influence on the individual is the neighborhood or local community in which he dwells. In countless pervasive ways it affects his life for good or ill. The provision which it makes for his education and his protection, the opportunity which it affords for his livelihood, the kind of recreational opportunities which it offers, the nature of its social and civic organization, all have a subtle bearing on the kind of person which he becomes and so cannot be ignored by a Church that cares for personalities who are meant by God to live as His children. The Christian is called of God to serve his fellows in the community to which he belongs and therefore enters wholeheartedly into its life, yet he realizes that in many ways its life is marred by sin and that accordingly his participation in it must be a critical participation. The Christian who is sensitive to the will of God as revealed in Christ and remembers that he is not to be "conformed to the world" must always experience a tension between illegitimate demands which the community may make upon him and the higher demand of God.

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\* Quotations not otherwise identified are from the reports of the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, the general point of view of which is reflected throughout this statement.





The life of the nation likewise is of deep concern to Christianity. The Christian accepts national communities "as part of God's purpose to enrich and diversify human life." He rejoices in the fact that each nation may make a distinctive contribution to God's plan for the world. He is rightly conscious both of the debt which he owes to the country of his birth or of his adoption and of the ties which bind him to his fellow-citizens who share the same heritage. But at the same time the loyalty which the Christian owes to the State, as the political expression of his nation, must always be a qualified loyalty. The gift of the nation, like other gifts of God, can be and is abused. National pride and selfishness lead to injustice and wrong against other nations which also have their place in the Divine purpose, and such pride and selfishness must be regarded as sin against the God Who is the Creator and Lord of all peoples. A nation may even, as we see clearly, today, claim to be the object of man's supreme devotion and thus usurp in man's affections the place which belongs to God alone. Against all such tendencies the Church must insist that rightful authority of the State, like all other authority, is from God, and that the State therefore "stands under His judgment."

The different races to which individuals belong are also a part of God's purpose to bless mankind with a diversity of gifts, and each race is naturally grateful for its own possibilities. But since, in the Christian understanding of life, all men are children of God, made in His image, and "brothers for whom Christ died," the Christian cannot look down upon those of another race than his own or treat them with less respect and justice. He remembers that when God disclosed Himself in human form it was in One Who belonged to a race which was and is widely despised. Against all racial egotism and prejudice the Church therefore must set its face implacably, and the arrogance which makes race or "blood" the test of worth must be rejected as rebellion against the God Who has made all mankind to be His family.

The relations of men to one another as members of families, communities, nations and races are deeply affected by the economic organization of society. The ways in which men earn their daily bread and use the material resources of the world condition all their social experience. It is important, therefore, to give special attention to the bearings of Christianity on our economic life and for this reason we take the economic realm as a specific case-study in the relation of the Church to the whole social environment.\*

### The Character of the Economic Order

The system of free enterprise, generally described as capitalism, has resulted in an industrial development which "for the first time in human history, has made it possible to overcome the natural scarcity of economic resources by successive technological improvements." It has made it possible for mankind to have sufficient resources to provide adequately for the physical necessities of all. Through the inventive genius which free enterprise has stimulated the physical labor of manual workers has been reduced and all parts of the world have been brought into relation with one another.

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\* For a fuller study of the subject, see the Oxford Conference report on "The Church and the Economic Order" which is here followed in large part.





But in several important respects the operation of our economic system produces results which challenge the Christian understanding of the true meaning of life and the true nature of man. For one thing, the economic structure tends to enhance the acquisitive spirit. The private ownership and control of the means of production place those who have little or nothing except their own labor at the mercy of the owners, except in so far as the workers may gain power through collective action, and encourage owners in the assumption that they are entitled to all the surplus after the costs of production have been met, regardless of the effect upon others. In so far as the pursuit of profit becomes the dominant factor the moral and spiritual quality of life undergoes deterioration. There is a feverish scramble for more and more money and a false valuation of success as consisting in the amassing of material goods. Disintegration of society also takes place when industry is consciously organized not in terms of service to the common good but in terms of private advantage, and the conflict of financial interest between owners and workers intensifies economic strife and division into economic classes. Moreover, the fact that industry continues to function only when it can produce a profit for the owners means that the workers are constantly exposed to the threat of unemployment and to a feeling both of insecurity and uselessness.

In the second place, the operation of the economic system results in grave inequalities of opportunity among men. While Christianity does not require that all men should have equal material resources, it does imply that all men, as children of a common Father, are entitled to a general equality of opportunity to make the most of their lives. Christianity thus runs counter to arrangements which make some men hardly more than means to others' ends. Yet the product of industry is distributed in such a way that some live in luxury while others lack the necessities of decent living. As a result great numbers of children - to mention only a single illustration - suffer needlessly from malnutrition and are forced to go to work before they have received anything like an adequate education. These disparities of economic circumstance appear even more shocking when we consider the difference between country and country or race and race in this respect. Those who live in more privileged geographical areas or who have had great economic opportunity enjoy relative abundance while the great masses of other races or nations are compelled to live on a scale which is insufficient even for physical health and comfort.

In the third place, the private ownership of the means of production is likely to place too great power over others in the hands of a few individuals or groups. The leaders in the world of finance and the owners of great industries are able to control too largely the lives of millions of other men, except as trade unionism and industrial legislation succeed in limiting this power. The possession of economic power tends to produce, in those who possess it, a dictatorial attitude; in those over whom the power is exercised, a feeling either of servility or of resentment. Thus psychological barriers are erected which put difficulties in the way of the achievement of the Christian ideal of fellowship.

The realization of the evil results of our economic organization has produced a grave discontent among those who suffer most, and radical movements like Communism have arisen in protest. In some countries the radical movement has identified itself with a protest against the Church and even against Christianity and all belief in God. In the main this is due to an underlying materialistic interpretation of life, but it is also due in some measure to the fact that the institutions of religion had been insensitive to economic injustices, had shown little sympathy with the underprivileged and had been in





the control of those who profited most from the existing arrangements. The churches must, of course, reject the godlessness and the materialism of the radical movements, but since the churches themselves have been partly responsible for the association of radicalism with an anti-religious outlook, they must be careful not to regard an attack against themselves as necessarily hostility to God.

In thinking of the contrast between the spirit of the existing economic system and the Christian view of life, there is a constant danger of too easily assuming that some other system would produce results more in accord with the Christian conscience. There is always a subtle tendency to attribute the evils to the system itself rather than to human sin. The Church knows that no change in the outward ordering of life can of itself eradicate social wrong and injustice. It recognizes the Utopian character of all expectations for the fulfilment of the meaning of human existence merely through the natural processes of history. It must therefore hold all other systems up to the same standards of criticism, derived from the Christian revelation, which it applies to the present order. Although the private ownership of the means of production puts too great power over others into the hands of a few, we have to point out that nothing more consonant with Christianity happens when the means of production are in the hands of state-appointed bureaucrats. Although capitalism fosters inequalities of opportunity, there is plenty of contemporary evidence that Communism and the other totalitarian movements mean a loss of the freedom of thought which is essential to Christian personality. Such considerations should not lead us to infer that one way of ordering economic life is as good or as bad as another, but they should at least put us on our guard against assuming that acknowledged evils are chiefly due to a particular system rather than to sinful impulses which may express themselves in different ways in different systems.

#### What Christians Are To Do

When we ask what constructive action is to be taken by the Church in bringing our economic life into fuller accord with the requirements of Christianity, it is important to distinguish the different senses in which the word "Church" is or may be used. By the Church we sometimes mean the men and women who compose it; sometimes, its authorities, especially the clergy; and sometimes the institution in its corporate life. If we are not to fall into hopeless confusion about the function of the Church, we must make it clear, in the case of any particular function, in what sense we are speaking of "the Church" and, accordingly, on whose shoulders the responsibility for action falls.

The duty of Christians, whether clerical or lay, in reference to economic life is twofold: First, "to bear witness to their faith within the existing economic order"; and, second, "to test all economic institutions in the light of their understanding of God's will."

The first duty requires that even in an economic setting which is not conducive to Christian conduct Christians shall do the best they can to follow the way of justice and love. They must do so even if it means financial loss and sacrifice. Our Lord never promised that true discipleship would be easy or painless.





The second duty requires Christians to realize that the forces of evil with which they have to contend are not found in individual hearts alone but have entered into the institutions and structure of society and so must be combatted there. One's acts as a Christian within an established system must therefore not be regarded as the full measure of his Christian responsibility. He is under obligation to do his utmost, in association with others, to secure the type of economic structure which will be most in harmony with the Christian understanding of life.

### What the Church Is To Do

When we are thinking of the Church as a corporate body (as distinguished from the individual Christians who are its members) there are four major functions that need to be fulfilled through its official teachers and agencies:

1. The Church must witness to the necessity of such changes as will bring our economic life into fuller conformity with Christian requirements. It is a trustee of a gospel of redemption not only for the individual but also for the world as a whole, and it therefore belongs to the Church's prophetic office to interpret what this means in economic, as in all other, relationships. But this cannot be accomplished merely by broad generalizations about love and justice; it requires a facing of the concrete actualities in which men live, otherwise the Christian ethic will seem a vague platitude and its relevance to present-day society will never become apparent. The Church may be unable to say what specific means will achieve the Christian end, but through its preaching and teaching it must definitely confront its members with the Christian demand, show the contrast between that demand and prevalent practices and suggest the general direction in which Christian action should move. Different people - as a result of differences in knowledge and experience - may come to different conclusions as to the application of Christian truth to a particular problem, but it is always the function of the Church to make it clear that the Christian test must really be applied.

We are not urging that the Church should identify itself with "any set of ideas derived from any source other than its own understanding of the truth by which it lives."\* We are simply insisting that the Church bear effective testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus Christ and ask men to examine their economic life in the light of God's will. The fact that anything is an "economic" or a "political" matter does not exempt it from the Divine judgment and so cannot exempt the Church from the attempt to exercise the function of Christian ethical witness with reference to it. Such prophetic utterance, springing out of reflection upon the Word of God committed to the Church, is certain to be disturbing, in many respects challenging existing prejudices and self-interest, but for that very reason all the more necessary.

2. The Church must stimulate study and action by its members as to what Christianity requires, in concrete terms, in their various vocations and spheres of daily life. It is the laity, not the clergy or ecclesiastical authorities, on whom the responsibility for Christian decisions in the economic realm falls. But the laity have a right to look to the Church for moral and spiritual guidance in meeting their problems. Though they should not expect the Church

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\* 't Hooft and Oldham. The Church and Its Function in Society. The point of view of the volume is reflected throughout this section.





or its ministry to tell them what to do in their own situations, there are kinds of help to which they are entitled. The Church should help its members to understand the working of the economic order and to analyze alternative procedures critically in the light of Christian teaching. The average church member is not qualified to do this for himself. He needs the insight which the Church ought to help provide. But the Church cannot give such assistance to its members unless it takes the responsibility more seriously than it has usually done. Special agencies for study and research must be maintained by the Church, and Christian leaders of special aptitude and training must be set aside for this particular function.

Since programs of economic action can be put into effect only by lay men and women in their daily spheres of work, it is of the highest importance that the study which the Church initiates draw men of practical experience as well as religious teachers into its circle. There is abundant justification for impatience with clerical pronouncements made by men who do not themselves have to make the actual decisions. There is even reason to fear that the Church (or the minister) sometimes appears almost like a "common scold," condemning people without even really understanding the perplexities which they face. What is urgently needed is that the religious leader and the lay Christian of firsthand experience in the ordinary work of the world should study together in Christian fellowship what Christianity requires. The clergyman presumably, by reason of his training, has an insight into the meaning of the Christian Gospel which the man absorbed in immediate action does not usually possess. The Christian layman, by reason of his daily experience, is the only one who is able to take into account all the practical factors which are involved in bringing changes to pass. The competence which neither one has alone can be secured through their collaboration.

The Church should also stimulate its members to Christian action by lifting their economic activity up into the realm of worship. Too often worship and work are divorced from each other. The worship of the Church easily becomes a matter of formal piety unrelated to the crucial decisions and perplexities which the worshippers are facing. It may even be (and often is) an evasion of reality, an escape from the actualities of life into a world of the imagination. But true worship is "an active dedication of the will to a God Who .... has positive ends for the world." To bring the ethical problems of our economic life consciously into the experience of worship will give a new spiritual significance to economic activities and inspire men to seek economic solutions in the light of God's will for human life.

3. The Church should encourage the formation of little groups within itself which are more ready than the rank and file to engage in social experiment and pioneering social action. Most of the great social advances made by the Church have been initiated not by the Church as a whole in its official capacity but by the few who took the Christian Gospel so seriously that they were willing to incur risks in its behalf. Historical illustrations of this fact are found in the way in which the Christian conscience was developed against social wrongs like slavery and war, and in which new movements like foreign missions and the Sunday school came into being. Taken as a whole the membership of the Church includes people of widely different levels of social attitude and ethical sensitiveness. They do not represent a compact fellowship committed to a distinctive way of life and a clear position with regard to the character of society. Being virtually a cross-section of the established order, they are not conscious of the necessity for the transformation of that order. The inertia and lack of spiritual understanding in the mass can, however, be overcome by adventurous minorities.





But such minorities need to feel that they have the encouragement of the Church, and the individual pioneer needs the reinforcement of others of similar prophetic spirit. To help them to find one another and to develop a fellowship of thought and feeling and action in exploring together what Christianity means in terms of concrete action in their own spheres of daily life is one of the most important opportunities of the Church. There are such little fellowships today (Christian "cells" as the Oxford Conference called them). There ought to be at least one in every community - if not in every parish.

4. The supreme social function of the Church is to be, in its own corporate life, a truly Christian society. In the long run its influence on the social order will be determined less by what it does than by what it is. As was said at Oxford again and again, "Let the Church be the Church." Let the empirical Churches, that is to say, be the kind of Church to which the Gospel of Christ bears witness, taking its standards from the Christian revelation instead of from the world, and thereby demonstrate that a fellowship transcending all the divisions which now sunder mankind can be and is a reality.

In a world of nationalism gone mad, let the Church be the Church. Not merely a national but a supra-national fellowship, conscious of being one Body of Christ throughout the world, recognizing a greater loyalty to the worldwide Christian community than to any nationalist State. In a world of racial tension and conflict, let the Church be the Church. Not a fellowship of Aryans but of all men, of whatever racial background, who have found in Christ the true meaning of life; a place, therefore, in which Negroes would really feel a warmth of interracial fellowship far different from the climate of the community at large, a place where Jews would know that all traces of anti-Semitism had disappeared. Nothing else that the Church could ever do for the solving of racial and international conflict would be comparable to its actually being in its own life a supra-racial and supra-national community.

In a world of class-consciousness and strife, let the Church be the Church. Not a one-class institution, as so many of our local churches are, but a fellowship in which social distinctions have disappeared in the presence of the God Who is the Creator and Father of all. We have to admit that we do not usually see employers and factory workers meeting in the same house of God. The hungry, the insecure, the dispossessed we do not find in any large numbers in any church at all. The one great way for the Church to influence the economic order most deeply would be to be itself a supra-class fellowship.

Such a Church, - supra-national, supra-racial, supra-class - may seem only a Utopian ideal, bearing little or no relationship to the actualities of our social life. The "real" Church, it may be objected, is composed of the same people who make up the community-at-large and so reflects all the prejudices, narrowness and sub-Christian outlook of secular society. But the Church is never merely the sum of the practices and attitudes of those who happen to compose its present membership. It has a given quality derived from its origin in Christ, which provides an unchanging standard by which the churches have to be tested and remade. Because of this given quality a tension is set up in the churches between the demands of the Gospel and the practice of the world. As long as the Church is the place where this tension is kept alive and consciously felt, so long may we expect moral and spiritual renewal to take place.





All this means that we must have a higher conception of the Church than is generally held today. It is not sufficient to conceive of it as a voluntary society, like a Masonic order or a university, to which a man may or may not relate himself as he prefers. It is not enough to think of it simply as an outgrowth of the cultural process. We shall have a Church which is truly a supra-national, supra-racial, supra-class community only as we see it as a supra-natural community, the creation of God through Christ, founded not on our feelings and aspirations but on revelation, not merely a part of the human order which we build but of the Divine order of the world.





## THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IN RELATION TO COMMUNITY

John H. Reisner

For the purposes of this paper the term, "church," includes any organized body or fellowship of Christian believers and every concern of Christianity. The term, "community," includes any group of people, large or small, having mutual interests, whether expressed or implied.

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The function of the church in relation to the community is to Christianize all of it--all its people, all its activities, all its influences. Any lesser function simply means that we believe God is not all in all and Lord of all, that life is divided and not a unity, that He is Creator and Redeemer of only part and not the whole. Moreover, God is Creator and Redeemer not only of man but of his environment. In any plan of redemption or salvation, not man only but the community and the environment must be considered as falling within the interests and program of the church. Any lesser objective is a denial of God's omnipotence and omnipresence.

The church must do much more than carry on social service activities. Its distinctive contributions go much farther than good works. The church must provide Christian ideals and motivation. It must think and act in terms of Christianizing all of life--of bringing the teachings and spirit of Christ and the understanding and operation of divine law into every experience, every activity, every relationship. It must deal with the realities of life--not only in terms of all human relationships, health, re-creation, the family, the community, but in terms of industry and agriculture, and in terms of the ethical use of raw materials and the conservation of our natural resources. We only promote secularism when we deny by word or act that the church is not concerned with such everyday things as work and play, health, the right use of raw materials, of plants and animals. Man does not live with and by man alone, but is dependent on God's goodness in the physical environment. Man cannot exist outside his natural environment, which is also part of divine creation. Urbanized life only alters the relative importance of the factors of environment--it does not change their fundamental necessity nor man's dependence on them. In any consideration of redemption, we must remember that man has not only sinned against God in his treatment of his fellowmen, but in his use of the environmental resources on which man depends. Our social sins comprehend much more than man's relationships to man. To such factors as bad housing, poor working conditions, inadequate nutrition, lack of recreational facilities, insufficient educational opportunities and on down the list, we need to add misuse, exploitation and destruction of our natural resources, especially the land on which the welfare of the human race ultimately depends.

We need not expect much change toward more Christian conditions of life in our community until Christian ideals and motivation are more adequately provided, and this is, as noted above, essentially a function of the church. However, we must not overlook the very important fact that to some degree at least Christian ideals are being provided in many areas of life from which the church has cut itself off from direct influence. An outstanding example of this is agriculture, still the most important occupation of mankind. The American Protestant church certainly has no clear cut Christian ideals for agriculture. American agriculture has been highly secularized and commercialized. Our soil has been exploited and destroyed. We think of production almost entirely in terms of quantity and price. Abundant harvests are a curse not a blessing as our national life is now organized. Christian morality and ethics are seldom considered as having any basic bearing on our





agricultural problems. And yet no church has ever been able to remain a vital influence in any community where the land has been destroyed. The welfare of the people and their institutions of family, church and school is inseparable from the welfare of the land. It is largely in America and England that land has lost its religious significance to the people who live on it. The only environment in America today that is still favorable to an ongoing family life is the land. Cities are committing race suicide and look to the land to keep them alive while they are dying. The churches do the same. Certainly all this is of importance to the church if it is to progressively increase and be the instrument of God in making a better world for the human race to continue to live in. The American Protestant church must provide Christian ideals and motivation in agriculture far more adequately than at present. Self-preservation demands it. The vocation of agriculture must be reinvested with the religious, ethical and moral values which inhere in it and which it has lost. No greater responsibility rests upon the church than this. The church need not expect rural life in America to be Christian and continue to allow the forces of commercialism and secularism to provide the ideals and motivation.

The commercialization and secularization that has overtaken agriculture has always largely inhered in industry and trade. In these areas of life the church has spoken, still speaks, though somewhat feebly. Her pronouncements need much implementation before industry and trade can be said to be on a Christian basis. As part of the same general picture, we have experienced an increasing secularization and commercialization of medicine (health); of recreation; of education; of the home. In an earlier day these matters were largely the concern of the church. The loss to society and community has not come so much from taking these interests out of the administration of the church as from the fact that the church has failed to provide ideals and motivation by which they might continue to function on a high religious, moral and ethical plane.

Another function of the church in the community is to interpret all of life in religious and spiritual terms. Religious experience is had within the daily life, not beyond or outside it. Has man's daily toil no religious significance, Have health, recreation, home life no religious meaning? Can there be no Kingdom of God on God's Holy Earth? Must we live and work and play part of the time on one plane--secular, and at another time on another plane--spiritual? The church can never hope to function except peripherally in the community until it claims again for God all human activities, all social relationships, and interprets all of life in religious and spiritual terms. This does not mean that all of life must be administered by the church, but that the church should provide the ideals, motivation, religious and spiritual interpretation for a Christian pattern of individual and community living, if it is to function fully in the high calling of relating mankind to God. The community must be made God-conscious in all its life.

Another function of the church in making the community God-conscious is making man conscious of his community. The two functions will not be far apart--indeed they should be coextensive. If the two great commandments of Jesus have any meaning for a Christian community, we must recognize the validity of the second in the matter of neighborliness. It is neighborliness, not cleanliness, that is next to Godliness, and the responsibility and practice of being a good neighbor should clearly be a religious objective in Christian living. Whatever the reason may be, urban life does not seem to promote the practice and enjoyment of neighborhood contacts in a personal way. City neighborhood contacts become increasingly impersonal, especially in the "better" neighborhoods. There is much more neighborliness in the poorer sections of the community. Is it because misery really loves company or that higher standards of living tend to make people more selfish--less neighborly? In both cases, the church as the conservator of and propagating agency for Christian ideals of living would seem to need to function aggressively and directly.



Consciousness of community and the practice of neighborliness clearly involve more than the payment of taxes for education, protection, health and sanitary measures, communication, etc. It involves a constant consciousness of God at work in the world, indeed all about one throughout the community, and a sense of personal responsibility not only to be Christian, but to act as a Christian. Jesus' own life and teachings, on which Christianity is based, make that abundantly clear. No Christian can "buy a substitute" to do what is his own individual Christian obligation to do. Without a consciousness of community, religious beliefs and practices become stymied and sterile. We cannot separate our responsibilities to God and to the community. This is not to say that the church should not emphasize worship, the renewing of the spirit, personal religious experience, any less, but that it functions inadequately in the community without a community consciousness and emphasis.





## THE RELATION OF CHURCH AND COMMUNITY IN EDUCATION

In the United States education is, in a very definite sense, an aspect of local community life. In sharp contrast to some of the educational systems of Europe education in this country is as far removed as possible from any control by the national state. This is due in part to the fact that the United States is a federation of commonwealths and that such educational responsibilities as inhere in political sovereignty are carried by these individual states, which have no responsibility for the formulation of national policies. It is also due in part, however, to the principle of local control which has evolved through a long period of educational history.

The importance of the isolation of education from the national state in a time when totalitarian movements are so much in evidence can scarcely be exaggerated. Of totalitarian states it may be said without exaggeration that education is an instrument of national policy as framed by an exclusive party. Such a theory is utterly incompatible with American educational philosophy. That the purpose of education should be conceived as the development of a national type, the maintenance of a national discipline or the propagation of a state philosophy runs counter to all our American educational assumptions.

This is not to assert that the national state influences education in no degree with reference to political policies. The introduction of military training in the colleges, and to some extent on the secondary school level, is undoubtedly a direct response to governmental initiative. It is also true that the increased necessity for subsidies to education on the part of the national government in order to equalize educational opportunity leads to the limitation in certain ways of state or local initiative. Such limitations, however, are directed toward safeguarding democratic procedures to which the nation as a whole has long been committed. The instances of federal initiative only serve to emphasize the prevailing independence of education in America from control by the national government. In the effort to maintain the ideals of liberty and equality in education we seek to utilize the resources of the federal government in the equalization of opportunity throughout the nation, while leaving control almost entirely within the states.

Even within the several states a studied separation obtains between the schools and the political government. The school system is established and maintained by state authority. The conditions of attendance are fixed by government, which levies taxes for the support of education. In certain cases government intervenes to prohibit specified educational practices or even the teaching of doctrines which are regarded as objectionable. The anti-evolution laws of certain states are cases in point. Broadly speaking, however, the control of public education is left to the local community. As Professor Paul Monroe, in a paper prepared for the Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, has said, "government itself endeavors to keep its hands off education and leave to expressions of the state other than political government the formulation and control of educational procedures." While the school district is a unit of the state, it represents the state in its least "political" form, in which there is a minimum of governmental control. Hence the American system of education is, theoretically at least, as closely responsive as it could be made to the currents of community life. It is as broadly cultural in conception and intent as a practicable system could well be. Hence in the light of the present world situation and by contrast to the tendencies in totalitarian countries American education is an outstanding resource for the maintenance of democracy.





Thus in the United States education on the elementary and secondary levels is prevailingly public rather than private, secular rather than religious, and subject to local rather than governmental control. This theory of educational control has a very considerable historical background. Among the thirteen Colonies three types of educational policy obtained. In the South where British traditions were strong the theory tended to prevail that the home was the seat of educational authority; in the Middle Colonies the authority resided in the various sectarian bodies; in New England the pattern of community control developed. That this was possible in New England earlier than in the Middle Colonies was apparently due to the fact that the Puritan faith predominated in New England, and there were no rival sects to challenge community policy in the matter of education. In the Middle Colonies there were strong rival sects and it was naturally difficult to develop an acceptable community policy.

Gradually, however, the New England pattern came to dominate in this country, apparently for the following reasons: (1) In a population religiously diverse it was impracticable to maintain religious schools of adequate standards for the various groups. (2) American political and social ideals, while not anti-religious, were developed under the influence of the Enlightenment which ran counter to many of the tenets of "revealed" religion. The American tradition was strongly non-ecclesiastical and at the end of the Colonial period the combined active membership of the churches was small. (3) American education was developed in response to a strong demand for the implementing of democratic theory. This made it natural and desirable that education should be predominantly a function of the community as a whole.

It would be very far from the truth, however, to suggest that a wholly consistent philosophy to govern the control of education has been worked out in America. We are still suffering from confusion, but the main difficulty seems to be that the popular notions of educational control have been developed against the background of the Church-State controversy and it is uncritically assumed that education is in some peculiar sense a state function. That this is far from a true statement of the case a little reflection will show. The Roman Catholic Church, which is strong in the United States, maintains an extensive system of parochial schools. According to the latest figures available there are about 8,000 elementary and secondary Catholic parochial schools in this country. A much smaller number of such schools are maintained under other Church auspices. A few years ago an effort was made in the State of Oregon to put an end to parochial schools through compelling by law all parents to send their children to public schools. However, the United States Supreme Court annulled the Oregon law and established clearly the right of parents to send their children to non-public schools.

This was but a judicial validation of an established American principle. Clearly the educational process itself is not a function vested in any one institution, secular or religious. The maintenance of educational standards, the equalization of opportunities through grants of funds and the enforcement of certain requirements or prohibitions that are deemed socially desirable -- all of these are functions which the state commonly performs. The instructional process, however, may be carried on by any groups which satisfy the constituted authority as to their adequacy within a general framework of standards. Even public education, as we have seen, is vested in the state only in the limited sense in which a local school district can be said to represent the state.





From the point of view of many religious leaders, however, this system of education leaves much to be desired. We have sketched the origins of American educational policy showing how, in order to avoid sectarian conflict, an exaggerated secularism arose. This system has been consistently opposed by the Roman Catholic Church as inconsistent with its educational philosophy. There are many signs that Protestants are coming to share in part the Catholic view that the separation of education from religion is artificial and inimical to the national well-being. This dissatisfaction has expressed itself in efforts to maintain weekday classes in religious education, and in some cases religious instruction under sectarian auspices is given on what is called "released time," that is, periods belonging to the public school time but released for purposes of religious education in accord with specific requests from parents.

It is clear, however, that such plans offset but feebly the disparity in time between the hours given to religious education and those given to general education. Furthermore, and more significantly, the gulf in conception and viewpoint between a purely secular education and religious education is very great. It is commonly remarked that history or science may be taught with such mechanistic and non-spiritual assumptions as to nullify any religious teaching that is done in formal religious classes. The philosophy of life, the scheme of values that general education presupposes and encourages are of more significance than any particular subject matter that may be taught.

Thus there seems to be a tendency in America today on the part of Protestant religious leaders to approximate the Catholic position regarding the true relation between religion and education. This fact alters to some extent the American situation from a strategic point of view. Throughout the history of the educational system Protestants have given unstinted support to the secularists in contending that religious teaching must be kept out of the schools and that no public funds should be used for parochial schools. Indeed, perhaps Protestant support of this position has been even stronger than that coming from anti-religious sources. With the changing mood, however, with reference to the relation between religion and education, the issue insistently arises whether religion should not be given a place in public education. In general, the Catholic Church has been hostile to any such proposal. Its position is logical enough. The Catholic Church supports its parochial schools and therefore, in large part, provides for the education of its children and youth. Hence, as Catholics see the matter, if non-Catholics wish general education to have a religious basis and background they should make the necessary effort to maintain their own schools. The Catholic grievance is that no recognition is made, in the distribution of the tax burden, of the fact that Catholics are taking care of the education of their own population. They continue to press for an allotment of tax funds to cover the cost of parochial schools on the theory that any religious group which takes care of its share of the burden of general education should be reimbursed for this effort.

In minor degree, the Catholic claim has been met in certain states by the provision of text books or free transportation to children in parochial schools on the same basis as furnished to attendants at public schools. However, in general, the resistance to this policy is strong and there is no immediate prospect of its wide extension. Even if such proposals met with a more cordial public reception the basic difficulty would not be met. The attempt to subsidize schools maintained by various religious groups, even if they might be assumed to maintain a creditable educational program, would mean the development





of a number of parallel educational systems representing different cultural emphases. This would definitely hamper the social integration upon which democracy depends. If we are to conserve the democratic values which have been developed by public education as a community function the present system of free public schools would seem to be vastly preferable to any other. Such preference, however, is conditioned upon the possibility that the difficulty here discussed could be solved. As matters stand, we have an educational system which only partially educates and because of its omission of religion tends to miseducate.

The problem presented to the churches by this situation in education is increasingly serious. It is, for Protestants in general, not at all a matter of a balance between ecclesiastical and secular functions since there is no disposition on the part of Protestant churches not now maintaining parochial schools to enter that field. The issue is rather one of the place of religion in American culture. It is becoming clear that in our zeal to prevent ecclesiastical control of public education we have contributed directly to the creation of a social situation that is widely deplored. The contemporary social disintegration which was so much stressed in the reports of the Oxford Conference is in part, certainly, a manifestation of failing sanctions, weakened loyalties, confusion about values and abandonment of moral discipline. It would be a gross exaggeration to assert that our educational system is the cause of all these trends or that a definitely religious orientation in public education would obliterate them. Nevertheless, religion must be recognized as one of the prime integrating factors in any culture. It would seem, therefore, to be a defect in our educational system that it fails to make the educative process develop a spiritual rootage in the lives of children and youth.

Not only does this secularism omit an important element in the education of the individual as a person, but in a system in which all significant aspects of contemporary culture are avowedly brought into the classroom the studied avoidance of religion gives the unmistakable impression that it is marginal interest, of doubtful importance. This is quite inconsistent with the current emphasis in education upon its identification with life itself.

It is noteworthy that Catholic leaders as well as Protestants are showing indications of dissatisfaction with the present situation. The Catholic Church, in spite of its extensive system of parochial schools, is feeling the impact of a secular civilization which is at war with the spiritual elements of the culture on which it was built.

In a recent address, Monsignor Joseph M. Corrigan, rector of the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., said: "Better far for you and me, for the church of God, for this Republic, that there were around us a strong aggressive Protestantism, worshipping God in what to you and me would be heresy and schism, but preaching the morality of Jesus Christ. Better far, likewise, that Jewry, God beloved in old Judea, were maintaining its loyalty to the commandments given in Sinai. But what has come to pass is a nation without religion, faced with the inevitable results of irreligion."

Rev. Francis A. Walsh, O.S.B., of St. Anselm's Priory, Washington, D.C., at a recent interfaith meeting in Washington said: "Why are we so afraid of bringing any moral or religious training into the schools? Are we afraid that our democracy will be ruined or that some religious group will dominate us? The real danger lies in the fact that if we don't act, we may some day find the people who have religion under the thumbs of those who haven't religion."





"I would rather see all Catholic children brought up under the instruction of Protestant teachers of religion rather than receive no religious education at all, as in the case of five out of six throughout the nation at present."

It should be emphasized that the Protestant religious leaders who are showing concern over the extreme secularism of our educational system are not thinking in traditional terms. They have no quarrel with a scientific education. Nor are they interested in exalting institutional authority. They are definitely opposed to the sectarian control of education. They are concerned rather that religion which from primitive times has been associated with all the significant and crucial phases of human experience and which has immemorially furnished sanctions and produced motivation for conduct should be able to play its part in the education of children to youth.

Should some way be found to implement this ideal in public education, the function of the Church itself would be both enhanced and clarified. Building upon a foundation of intelligence and appreciation with respect to religion, the Church could direct its educational efforts toward the exploration of its own philosophy and way of life, its own form of worship, its own organization of religious activity -- all this with much greater promise of success than today. In a population rendered intelligent, through public education, about the role that religion plays in the culture the Church could perform a distinctive function by leading its people in pursuit of a Christian way of life.

The Church today is sadly limited in its effort to Christianize social life by the fact that the secular community, preoccupied with the pursuit of private gain and responsive to material more than to spiritual values, actually educates against those ideals for which ethical religion standards. The Oxford Report on the Church and Education called attention to this fact in these words: "The community in its forms of life largely molds the personalities of its members. The system of relationships -- social, economic and political -- is a more potent educational influence than any formal schooling." It is hardly too much to say that unless the religious life of the nation finds expression in public education this system of social relationships will remain so hostile to the values which religion seeks to conserve and foster that the efforts of the churches to lay the foundation for ethical living will continue to be frustrated.

Nowhere is this tendency to the frustration of ideals more manifest than in the church's efforts to carry on Christian social education on the adult level. Protestant theology has made much of the concept of "Christian vocation." Today, as the Oxford Conference pointed out, the sense of Christian vocation is largely smothered by the pagan character of contemporary life. In other words, Christianity implies cultural ideals with which the world of social, economic and political relationships is today at war. Our society is dualistic, a house divided against itself. On the religious side it bears testimony to ideals for the realization of which the social structure makes no provision. Surely a definite orientation in public education toward the religious values which our people hold in common would go far to overcome this grievous cleavage in American culture.



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## THE CHURCH AND THE FAMILY

It is difficult to generalize about family life in the United States because many types of family patterns exist alongside one another. The new immigrant families differ from the older American families and the former and the latter differ enormously among themselves. Rural and urban types also show striking contrasts. Rural families range all the way from serf-like share croppers to families occupying princely estates. Urban families range from those dwelling in abject wretchedness in slums to families with an income of several million dollars a year. We have also foot-loose migratory families which contrast sharply with those whose members rarely leave their neighborhoods. Comparable differences in ethical and spiritual ideals and cultural status cut across these other variations. Nevertheless as the mass of American families are affected by general political, economic and cultural conditions there is doubtless an American type of family experience.

### 1. Major Social Trends Affecting American Family Life

Perhaps the greatest inward change is in authority. There is a lessened authority of men and a greater freedom of women. There is also less control by parents and more self-determination of children. Less importance is attached to tradition, current interests and points of view of members loom large. Thus the family exists and develops in a social ferment.

The family grows smaller. The birth rate has been strangely disturbed by the depression so that families on relief have shown a higher fecundity than those which are self-sustaining. Large families continue among Southern mount people and among new immigrants, but second and third generation families of immigrant stock tend to approach the birth rate of the country as a whole.

The American family is shifting from its rural or small village base and is becoming urban and suburban. There is a lessening of the old type of family life marked by close personal acquaintance with a few neighbors, and we have more families whose social milieu is complex and who have fleeting contacts with a large number of people. Therefore many families do not become deeply rooted in any community. The old homestead tends to become only a tradition and families live in more crowded places with less access to nature. Nevertheless the single family dwelling has held its own in recent years. The neighborhood tie is gradually being replaced by ties of interest groups.

The city family shows in more striking fashion the trends toward a lower birth rate and a higher divorce rate. Also fewer city men and women are married than rural, although there is an increasing proportion of marriages to total population and a decreased average age at marriage. Americans show a high marriage rate as compared with other peoples.

Increase in facility of transportation has increased the moving and scattering of families. Along with this there has been, however, an increase in the range of contacts through the press, the telephone, the radio, the movies and other means of contact with the world. These contacts offer at least the possibility of a rich experience of the family with its world.

There is a marked loss in some of the older functions of the home. Production has largely gone to the factory. Education has been turned over to the public school, yet the child must get a great part of his education in personal





adjustments through his family experiences. Even religious education in the family has been neglected on the mistaken supposition that this is the function of the church school. It is realized increasingly, however, that the home is the greatest agency for the teaching of religion, and that the churches and church schools cannot make up for the neglect of religious training in the family. If the Christian movement had given as much attention to families as it has given to churches, its cause would be in a better way and we would now have both better homes and better churches.

The departure of many forms of productive activity from the family has been accompanied by almost as rapid an increase of women working for wages in the economic world and of women entering the professions or the arts. This process has been facilitated by the broader and higher education of women. These have also been accompanied by a raising of the status of women, who now have more opportunity to earn and to administer wealth and also an enhanced political status. Thus there is an opportunity for women to exercise a greater influence in moulding community and national life. It remains to be seen how they will use it.

The increase in the divorce rate accompanying urbanization and the increased economic freedom of women does not necessarily prove that there are fewer families of intrinsic excellence, but may indicate mainly that the threshold of success in marriage is higher. Women, and to some degree men also, refuse to tolerate marriages which fail to give them the values which they seek. Community pressures for the continuation of such marriages as are not intrinsically valuable in themselves have relaxed. This is a danger, but also a challenge to put marriage on a firmer basis. Women in the United States are expressing themselves in favor of somewhat liberalized grounds of divorce as compared with the grounds recognized in states whose laws are now strictest.

From the economic point of view we find two opposite trends: a higher general standard of comfort and convenience along with less security for most and unwarranted poverty and frustration for millions of families. Also we have fewer servants but more household machinery.

One-third of the families of the country are ill-housed, and millions are on relief. While the number of families which have held together strongly in spite of untoward economic conditions has been inspiring, yet in general there has been a loss of morale among families in acute economic distress. Those which were not integrated have become further disorganized. For many there has been a blurring of the normal roles of members, as when fathers have ceased to be breadwinners and the families have had to look elsewhere for support. Damage to the conception of the normal role of fatherhood is especially serious in view of the fact that ability to make the Christian idea of God meaningful psychologically upon preserving a high regard for the role of fatherhood in the family.

The marriage rate sank to 75% of normal during the depression, putting many young people who would have been setting up new homes into a situation of strain and frustration. The apparent economic hopelessness of the situation along with the spread of a doctrine of greater sexual freedom among many led a certain proportion of these people to begin living as if married. The partial popularization of the idea that the old restraints belonged to a day that was past has resulted, for those who followed this idea, in a loss in emotional security. Only recently has the public begun to realize that emotional security may be quite as important as economic security.





Perhaps the most significant result of changes in circumstance and breaking up of older patterns of living has been an enhanced conception of personal factors in marriage and family life. While as an economic institution the family appears less necessary, the need for intimate sharing of lives and for security in emotional values places a new accent upon the necessity of making family relationships personally satisfactory to those concerned. Although it is evident that some of the functions and services that families used to perform can be taken up by other agencies, the home remains incomparably the best means of achieving the finest experiences of love, of understanding, of mutual support, of the sharing of life, and of personal development through filling various roles successively of child, youth, creator of a new family and parent to a new generation.

There is no substitute for loyal monogamy, with the two mates functioning as a larger unit, becoming one in spirit, and being able to trust each other somewhat as they trust God. There is no comparable way of providing for children that emotional security which arises in the sense of being loved, protected and cared for by parents whose relationship to each other and to them is not subject to doubt or uncertainty.

Although standards of sexual morality based on fear or on old taboos have been called in question, the inner necessity of making much rather than little of marriage by giving one's best to the task of creating a home is increasingly apparent. Over against theories of sex freedom, the opposite point of view that marriage is an art which requires personal devotion, competence and dependability seems to be gaining ground.

Church people have taken these changes in circumstance, in patterns of living and in points of view about marriage in a variety of ways. There has been some degree of unsettlement of individuals who have not known what to think or how to refute some of the more plausible demands for greater freedom. Parents also have been perplexed as to how they could impart to children a clear sense of the highest values in marriage, and some in a haziness of personal conviction have offered little anchorage to their youth.

On the other hand there have been those whose reaction has been arbitrary and authoritarian, and who have used harsh words for those who diverged from their points of view. The birth control issue in particular has brought from some of these persons harsh and indiscriminate condemnation of those who differed from them.

A third type of reaction, represented by a growing number, is to seek a clear and unbiased appraisal of the factors in successful marriage, to discern the highest goals of marriage, and to find means of strengthening marriage from within rather than holding it together from without. There is a realization of the fact that marriage is both a science and an art, and that as science it requires understanding and as art it calls for skill.

It becomes clearer that marriage is what people make it and that persons must understand it if they are to succeed in it. With increasing general awareness also of the devastating effects of ignorance and clouded thinking upon marriage the educational approach gains rapidly. We see that lack of education for marriage and lack of clinical services for those persons who experience domestic difficulties constitute an area of astounding neglect.





## II. Programs of Education for Marriage and Family Life

The unique significance of family life for Christianity makes it all the more incumbent on the Christian movement to train its people for the most successful homemaking. Much of this training must be given in the home itself as a laboratory of personal relationships for all its members. Other elements of training for family life may be given in schools. Churches also have their part to perform in this training.

Ministers marry the majority of couples in most of our communities, but it takes more than a Christian form of ceremony to make marriage Christian in any complete sense. The ceremony will have its fullest meaning and reality only if careful preparation is given beforehand; in that case the individuals will be better equipped to fulfil the vows which they take, the fulfilment of which is a matter of ability as well as of intention.

The church in the western world was able gradually to get its convictions about marriage written into the laws of western nations, but this regard for marriage was never worked out in educational procedures. In too great a degree the church has handed over the responsibility for safeguarding marriages to laws. But to preserve marriage at its best is something that the law cannot do because it is weak. To correct the error of over-dependence upon law an emphasis is now being placed on a broad program of educational preparation for homemaking.

The best programs of education for marriage are now taking up such points as these: (1) The growth of the individual in social experience and his development toward emotional maturity, (2) Clarification of the Christian conception of marriage not merely in terms of responsibility but of opportunity and fulfilment of life, (3) Preparation of the individual for economic adequacy, (4) Creating a regard for family success as one of the main goals of life, (5) Interpretation of the sex problem in scientific and religious terms, leading individuals to understand sex in a constructive way and not merely to think of it as an evil, (6) Training for parenthood, with insight as to the influence of group spirit and with practical study of child development, (7) Education in health and hygiene, (8) Training of family members as to the social and community adjustments which must be made, and making them aware of the resources of the community for enriching family experience, (9) Interpretation of the Christian religion as the spirit of the home, and development of programs of worship and religious growth, (10) The significance of the church as the larger family, participation in which gives the life of one's family greater significance

As the church works amid the patterns of life and with life's values, it should be in the forefront in helping homemakers and parents. The more the church can make of Christian homes the more strength it will impart to the Christian movement as a whole.

Uneasiness as to present neglect and the conviction that it is incumbent upon the church to build up family life is widespread. Increasing numbers of churches are working practically toward this end. One of the early responses to the new sense of the importance of the family for the church and of the church for the family was the custom of pastors to preach annual series of sermons on the home, sometimes called "Fireside Sermons". Some pastors have reported these series as the most appreciated of the year. Less formal treatment also has been given to family problems in forums and discussion groups. Classes in church schools have taken up various aspects of living in the home. Courses have appeared

1. The first part of the report  
describes the general situation  
of the country in 1911.  
It is a very interesting  
and valuable document.

The second part of the report  
describes the general situation  
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and valuable document.  
The third part of the report  
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It is a very interesting  
and valuable document.



for regular use of adult or homemakers' classes, and of young people. For the program in the home itself churches have promoted family worship and study, have organized "Family at Home Nights", "Family Weeks", "Home Fellowships of Groups of Families", in addition to the old method of pastoral calling in homes.

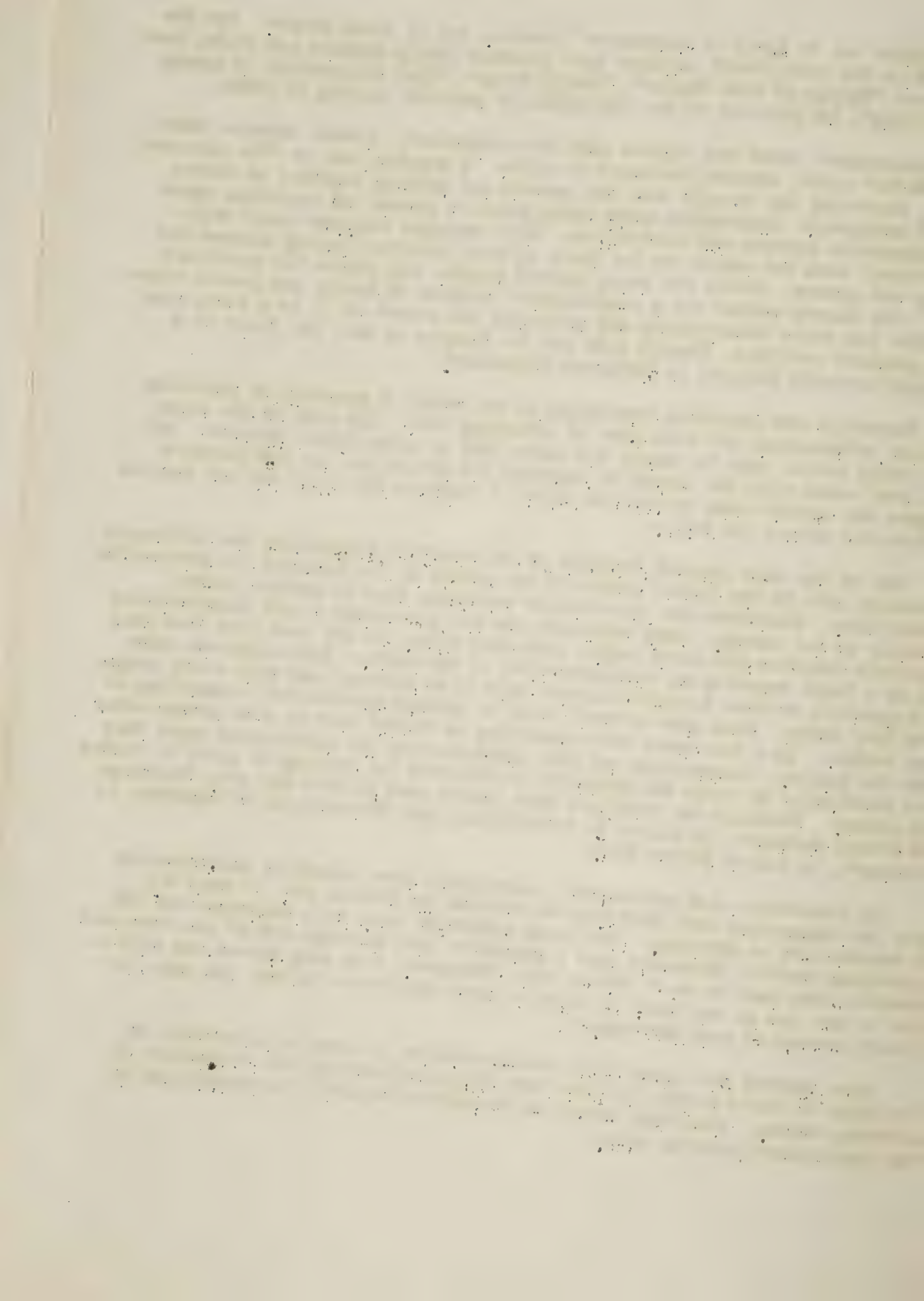
Homemakers' clubs and classes have been organized. In some churches there are "Hu-Wi" clubs, meaning Husband-Wife clubs. A popular name is "The Mariners' Club", featuring the thought that the members are sailing together on life's sea of matrimony. Especially among young people's groups and societies there are discussion courses and conferences. Some churches organize their whole educational work for adults on the basis of home building, having classes for brides and grooms, others for young married people, and others for successive ages. One church worked out a comprehensive program of family and parent education for its whole constituency and published the report of it in a forty-four page pamphlet entitled, "Family Life and the Kingdom of God: The Story of a Congregation-wide Project in Christian Education".

Education for Christian homemaking is not merely a question of imparting certain information, but even more of enriching life. The home is the place from which people come to church and where they go after church is over. But in a real sense also the church is wherever its people are, so the church's program may include many activities which it inspires but which are not carried on directly within its walls.

One of the most hopeful features of the church's program for the betterment of family life in the United States is the growth of the movement for pre-marital counselling. Ministers are increasingly realizing that to marry a couple casually is not enough. Many ministers are now performing a more distinctively spiritual function for every couple whom they unite, at the same time that they act in a legal capacity as representatives of the state. Some ministers make it a practice to have a heart-to-heart talk in an informal way with every couple whom they unite. Some give several hours to special pre-marital counselling of each couple. In a few cases the counselling is turned over to some person other than the pastor. Counsellors are also supplementing the instruction which they give personally by books and pamphlets recommended for reading or given to brides and grooms. Probably the materials most widely used in this way are, "Marriage and Sexual Harmony", by Oliver M. Butterfield, and "Foundations of Happiness in Marriage", by Leland Foster Wood.

In connection with pre-marital counselling, some ministers unobtrusively give the suggestion that they wish to continue as friends and, if need be, as counsellors in marriage. One young minister says, in a humorous vein but in serious spirit, "Remember that I guarantee this marriage and if you ever need counsel, come back to me." Others say, "Remember, I am your friend and will be glad to see you at any time; it means a great deal to me to have you make the finest success of your marriage."

Some pastors are using great resourcefulness in creating constantly in the minds of their people the idea that happy families are the foundation of a strong church. Thus they create an atmosphere favorable to counselling in case particular problems arise.





From times immemorial the teachers and prophets of religion have been regarded as friends and counsellors of mankind. However, in the Protestant movement, personal counselling has received scant attention until recently. Now, however, with a quickened sense of the need of individual guidance as to problems of the family, there is more regard for the counselling function. Almost inevitably ministers are called upon to aid some individuals and families in their adjustments. This being true, pastors should be prepared to perform this function on a high level of professional preparation and personal competence. Pastoral contact on the basis of skilled help in family building and personal adjustments makes the pastor more truly a shepherd and less a mere ringer of door bells. Many ministers, simply as friends of their people, are performing a service of incalculable value in keeping home life on a high level. There are numberless cases in which families need help but do not know where to get it. Facilities for granting divorces are available, but help in bringing ailing marriages back to health have not been provided.

Ministers who are wise do not try to handle all family problems personally. They supplement their own counselling by drawing upon the special skill of psychiatrists, physicians, social workers, home economists, teachers, lawyers and others who are able to give skilled help at certain points. In a number of cities "family adjustment centers" have been organized under the auspices of individual churches, or by groups representing both churches and other agencies.

Denominational organizations are recognizing a responsibility for promoting and leading this movement among their constituencies. Several denominations have made some staff provision, in most cases too meagre, for such leadership. A number of the denominational offices have published promotional pamphlets to forward this cause, and also have put out study courses and helps. A journal called The Christian Home has appeared and is used in several denominations, and innumerable articles are provided in other religious periodicals on various aspects of family life. There is a phenomenal distribution of helps for family worship, a field that religious publishing houses have not widely opened until recently.

The interdenominational organizations are now providing a central clearing-house and a coordinated leadership in this field. The Federal Council of Churches issued a statement entitled, "Ideals of Love and Marriage". Later it brought out a publication called, "Building the Christian Family: A Program for the Churches", in which definite suggestions are offered for putting education in Christian Family Life into the program of the local church. This organization has also issued a little manual on counselling called "Safeguarding Marriages". As an aid both to leaders and to members of its groups, it has prepared a Bibliography of some hundreds of titles of books and pamphlets, carefully classified and briefly annotated.

The International Council of Religious Education has a committee on Family and Parent Education, through which it has issued a pamphlet, "The Church's Opportunity in Family and Parent Education". A section of its Curriculum Guide deals with the program for Family and Parent Education through church schools and through leadership training courses. The International Council has also a Bulletin called: "Youth Action in Preparing for Marriage and Home Life", and other valuable material. The National Council of Federated Church Women, through its Committee on Marriage and the Home, has issued outlines and





suggestions for church women. The programs of these three interdenominational organizations are carried out with an increasing amount of cooperation, and a body of curriculum material on family life is being gradually created which is available for the various types of church groups and classes.

While the question of divorce has vexed the church, not much has been done in a constructive way to prevent the breakdown of marriage. A re-study of the words, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder", is preferable to the easy assumption that all persons who have been united by a Christian ceremony are therefore joined by God. "What does it mean for two to be joined by God?" is a question that must be asked.

The relation between marriage under the church and under the state and the attitude which the church should take to various kinds of divorce need further clarifying. There are some who believe it to be sound social policy to have moderately easy divorce available from the state, at least for those who do not deliberately intend their union to be on a Christian basis. The distinctive function of the church in relation to marriage would then be to hold up the highest ideals and to promote them by spiritual means, but not to set a fixed legal pattern for all marriages. At any rate the best procedure for the church is to concentrate on the success of marriage and make divorce less attractive and less necessary as a way of escape. Divorces, when considered, should not be legal battles but honest efforts to work out the best possible plans for individuals in difficulty. A couple should present its difficulties to a commission of socially-minded people, possibilities of adjustment should be studied, and all normal resources exhausted before appealing to the finality of divorce.

University and theological education, as well as the local church, are advancing rapidly in bringing the interests of the family into the curriculum. Colleges are grappling with the problems of family relationships in the changing scene. Their curricula are recognizing the sociology of family life and the practical things in the science of homemaking. Theological seminaries are preparing men and women not only to be leaders of churches but also to be pastors of families.

The movement for better family education in the churches blends into a general family and parent education movement, carried out in many forms of adult education outside the churches. A number of strong national organizations are giving themselves to various phases of education for family life. The church is increasingly keeping in touch with these organizations at the same time that it makes its own unique contributions to the spiritual life of American homes.





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How Life Goes On and On  
In Training  
The Age of Romance  
The Story of Life  
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## THE CHURCH AND THE POLITICO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Two major developments mark the history of the Christian movement on a world scale in the post war period. On the one hand, Christianity is no longer seriously challenged by other historic faiths such as Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc. They have not been able to demonstrate their superiority either in the realm of philosophy or that of practice. In so far as they too are spiritual interpretations of life and thus in some sense expressions of the Word which was from the beginning with God, they are, like Christianity, under attack from the secularist forces and philosophies of our day, and a tendency for a rapprochement among the various religions in the struggle against secularism, materialism and totalitarianism develops. On the other hand, on the very soil of Christendom rival "faiths" have arisen, the Church is persecuted, Christians are martyred, and the whole Christian concept of life challenged. The Christian "mission" today must penetrate beyond ideological and sociological rather than geographical and racial frontiers.

Communism, or Marxism-Leninism, one of these rival faiths, derives its vision of a just and brotherly social order, free from exploitation, class division and war, from the Jewish-Christian prophetic tradition. Christianity must, however, obviously reject its materialistic philosophy (even when allowance has been made for those elements in it which are not strictly materialistic), its resort to dictatorship and its practice and ideology of violence.

The Communist movement, as well as the labor movement generally in the western world, is experiencing a serious crisis. In Germany and Italy it has been virtually stamped out. Whatever be the interpretation of recent events in Russia, it is abundantly clear that the high hopes of the early years of the Revolution have not been realized either in the material or in the cultural and spiritual sphere. In various degrees and respects the movement in Spain, France and Great Britain confronts grave difficulties.

One reaction to "the crisis of the Left" is of great significance for the Christian missionary enterprise. Writers of the Left of the prominence of Andre Gide, W. H. Auden, the English revolutionary poet, Willi Schlamm, theoretician of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, Eugene Lyons, Sidney Hook, Edmund Wilson, Josephine Johnson, Ignazio Silone, the Italian novelist, are saying that it is "the attrition of ethical values" which is responsible for the failure of the revolutionary movement to achieve its goal. There is no morality in the Dialectic (dialectic materialism of Marx). We must recognize that society has to be saved, not by the processes of a mystic dialectic, but by the influence of human beings who are self-respecting and morally sound" (Schlamm). "The evil I see around me is deeper than politics -- It is a canker. There is the class struggle, the struggle between the town and the country, but underlying all these things there is man, a poor, weak, terrified animal. The canker has penetrated to his marrow" (Silone).



When men talk in such terms, they are saying what Christianity has always asserted and are consciously or unconsciously expressing a need which only religious philosophy and religious experience can meet. A church which is not prepared to undergo the terrific theological labor involved in translating its gospel into the language and thought-forms of our day, cannot "speak to the condition" of these men and the workers under their influence. Neither can a church which is entangled with Caesarism in economic and political life, which is a mere bulwark of the status quo. But a church which will meet its theological and its social responsibilities in conformity to the spirit of its Lord is, in my opinion, in a position to call upon men to follow Christ and not Barabbas, with more chance of being listened to than at any time in recent decades.

When we turn to the Fascist movement, we find a different situation. Theoretically the various varieties of Fascism represent a reactionary movement which cannot come to terms with Christianity, nor Christianity with it. Reaction in the economic realm to "anarchy," economic nationalism, as against the tendency to build a world-economy; reaction from democracy to dictatorship in the political realm; from at least lip-service to an ideal of peace to exaltation of war; reaction to racial and religious intolerance, etc. In the religious realm, Fascism represents a retreat from ethical and universal religion back to tribalism.

The Fascist movement in its various forms is a growing one. It seems obvious moreover that the modern state everywhere in time of crisis, especially of war, will demand of the church and of Christians an absolute and unquestioning allegiance which they will be unable to give without denial of supreme loyalty to "the one Lord, Jesus Christ." The Church may everywhere in the western world find itself again a minority spiritual fellowship confronted by a hostile and persecuting state.

It is natural that under these circumstances a tendency should develop (Barth etc.) in the Church which may briefly be characterized as follows: (1) It reacts against the social optimism of the preceding period. (2) It represents a transfer of interest from outer activities and social action to the inner life of the believer with God. (3) There is a renewed emphasis upon the sin and corruption of individual and society. (4) There is a centering of interest upon eternal life, the "beyond time," as against preoccupation with any "earthly" concerns, including even unselfish service of one's fellows. The Kingdom of God cannot be realized "in history" etc. (5) The emphasis is on transcendence as against immanence in all the dealings of God with nature, man, society, history.

This tendency calls attention to aspects of the Christian world-view which had been neglected and constitutes a salutary corrective for certain elements in the creed and program of the typical Christian liberals and "social gospellers" of yesterday. Nevertheless, the "way out" for the church today is not in the abandonment but in the recovery of its faith and hope in the manifestation of the Kingdom of God. The church which is unable to do that will be unable in the long run to speak to the condition of the modern man. This civilization which is now in peril the church itself helped to create. Whatever setbacks may occur, humanity must either sink back into a neo-barbarism in which brute force and animalism reign, or it must continue the task of trying to build a world-civilization, a sane economic order, a democratic and international polity, a warless world. It was Utopian to believe that man could realize these things in his own strength and by the way of the sword rather than that of the Cross. But it is not the voice of the God who brought Israel "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" and who through Jesus proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord," which tells those who scan the horizon of our day for a sign of promise that the dream itself of the beloved community on earth is





This paper has deliberately dealt with major politico-economic trends in the western world as a whole, since the U.S.A. can be understood only as a part of that world. However, because of our geographical separation from Europe, the comparatively recent development of our industrial economy, our frontier heritage, and the comparative vastness of our resources, there are special characteristics of American development, a given stage in politico-economic life is likely to be reached later than in Europe, and there remains a possibility that certain stages may be modified or even -- remote contingency -- avoided. A word must be devoted to these matters.

The struggle about the acceptance of collective bargaining as the method of dealing with labor relationships in the basic industries is now being fought out in the U.S. It seems probable that organized labor will henceforth be a major factor in American economic and political life, as it has been in other advanced industrial countries for many years. There is no evidence, however, that the labor movement and the radical movement generally will not, unless new elements enter into the situation, presently face the same perplexities and difficulties as we have already noted in the Communist movement in Europe.

Both in labor circles and among other elements in the population not satisfied with the status quo, there is less disposition than there was a few years ago to believe that "we must choose between Fascism and Communism." There is a widespread belief that "we must adhere to the democratic process in affecting economic changes." There is as yet, however, no clear definition of what this should mean in dealing with concrete political and economic issues. In influential circles there is strong resentment against measures taken under the "New Deal." The economic crisis (unemployment, etc.) is again severe, with an increasing tendency, not altogether deliberate, to seek a way out through an armament boom.

What of the thinking and practice of the American churches in face of these developments? The influence of the majority of local churches throughout the country is probably still on the side of social conservatism. "Beyond question," however, a recent competent and cautious observer declares, "social attitudes are being changed" by the Protestant churches and "some little readiness for social action created." The trend in the American churches as a whole is away from the ultra-individualistic, ultra-fundamentalist emphasis to a gospel which is "one indivisible individual-social gospel."

In the more "advanced" sections of the church, in the theological schools, among the younger ministers, etc., a modified Barthianism has some spokesmen and a certain influence. The main trend, however, is that previously referred to in outlining the general situation in the western world, which seeks a new profundity and spiritual realism but remains social-activist. The strategy of the church according to those who hold this view may be summarized as follows:

1. The Church must be the Church. It is not a reform society or revolutionary party. It must bring God to men and mediate the redeeming love of God in Christ to them. The church of the redeemed is the only true and effective redeeming agency.

2. The Church has a great theological labor to perform. We need the readiness to appropriate all that is usable in current thought and to translate it into the language and thought-forms of our day which characterized the Early Church.





3. The Church must recognize that "the world" -- the economic order based on materialism, acquisitiveness and strife, as well as the effort by violence to revolutionize this order -- is not Christian. It must refuse to bless this world and identify itself with it. It will have to count upon the probable disintegration of this order in its bearing upon its own income and institutional problems.

4. The Church must prepare to adjust itself to a situation where it may again be for a time a minority spiritual fellowship faced by a hostile and persecuting state.

5. The Church must bear witness to the way of the Cross as against the way of the Sword in all relationships of life. It must withdraw support of war and the war-system. This is the positive strategy for making the social redemption which Christianity offers "come alive" in our day. Its acceptance is the one hope of averting catastrophe from western civilization.

6. We must toil and pray for the extension and intensification of that ecumenical movement of which Oxford was an outgrowth and symbol. The Church itself must be a fellowship which does not recognize bounds of nation, race or class, united not by man's inspiration but by the love of God.



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE FOR THE YOUNGER CHURCHES

What the significance of the American experience for the younger churches is, in the last analysis, is for members of these churches themselves to decide. The reason for discussing this question in connection with the work of this Commission lies in the fact that since this question is being treated within the frame work of our Commission it is, as a matter of fact, but one aspect of this experience itself and should be so regarded. All that we can do is to look out upon the work of the younger churches from the point of view of American experience and try to assess what would seem to us to be some of the implications for the younger churches of the papers given here.

In one sense, the American situation as regards the church and the social and economic order, which this Commission has considered, is quite radically different from the situation in the countries of the world where the Christian Church has been more recently established. The Christian community in America is numerically in the majority. The family, the community and the social order, so far as they are grounded on any religious considerations, have been related to the Christian view of life. The process of the more complete Christianization of the social order is therefore one of redeeming areas of life which in the course of development have been allowed to become pagan and amoral. The younger churches, on the other hand, represent, in most cases, a distinct minority in the community and face a family and community system which has been built on ethical and religious considerations other than those that spring from Christianity.

On the other hand, the younger churches in most areas are face to face with the same industrial and financial system that confronts the older churches. This system has grown up in the West, where Christianity has flourished but it is undergirded by no particular religious philosophy and has been allowed to become almost completely pagan and amoral. Again, while the younger churches are minority groups in the midst of great non-Christian cultures, it is becoming increasingly clear in the West that the church stands over against a vast secular order and may need to face again a minority status. In some countries the issue is clearly drawn and the secular order has been given new and alien religious sanctions. Even in countries where this is not the case, the secularization of whole areas of life is none the less a grim reality. Consequently, as Dr. Muste has pointed out in his paper "The Church and the Politico-Economic Situation", in the countries where Christianity has had a comparatively long history, "the church must prepare to adjust itself to a situation where it may again be for a time a minority spiritual fellowship".





The first task we have undertaken is one of interpretation. What is the social significance of Christianity? Prof. Niebuhr's answer to this question is one of profound significance to the younger churches. These churches have come into being in a period when individualism was the main emphasis in Western Christianity. They could not but be influenced by this fact. The gospel was preached to individuals and individual salvation was the message. Churches came into being in most cases as groups of individuals, unrelated to family or communal life. The early converts in the Japanese church, to be sure, more strongly influenced by the belief that through Christianity they could save Japan as a nation. They came into the church not so much as individuals seeking the highest good for themselves, but as patriots seeking the redemption of the nation.

This emphasis gave way, however, in the later church to the idea of individual redemption and individual probity and well-being. The younger churches, like the churches of America and the West when the foundations of these younger churches were being laid, have been strongly tinged with individualism. This interpretation of Christianity has done much to enhance the worth put upon the individual in these countries. It has above all, helped to raise the status of women. It has given to thousands of its members a new joy in life and a new sense of the dignity of humanity. But it has lacked the balance of a sense of communal responsibility.

As a corrective to an over-emphasis on individualism in Christianity and as a fresh interpretation of the social significance of our faith, Dr. Niebuhr's paper, "The Social Significance of Christianity", therefore has special value for the younger churches. He recognizes that communities are as much a creation of God as are individuals, "wholly dependent upon God for their being, subject to His judgment, lost without His salvation." In his paper it is not the "either/or" of the individual or society, but the "both/and" of what Dr. Muste quoting someone else calls "one indivisible individual social gospel."

In the older and more closely knit societies of Asia and Africa these individual-centered churches have been a challenge to family community and national life. They have tended to become disruptive forces in the community. The result has been honest opposition on the part of leaders in community and national life. While these men have admired the individual integrity that has been nourished in the Christian church, they have nevertheless been skeptical of the church's value because they see in it a revolutionary element which cuts across the family and the communal structure on which for generations society and the nation has been built. The West has paid the price of a secular individualism in the loss of much of value in communal life and in a threatened break-down of the family. Communal life is still strong among the peoples of Asia and Africa and "communal will" in the individual is still a deep seated reality.





May not Christianity through a deeper realization of its social significance as interpreted here by Professor Niebuhr be able to build into the community aspects of these older civilizations rather than continue to play into the hands of modern secularism by a continued over-emphasis on individualism? This is an exceedingly complicated question and is not easily solved in practice. The danger is that in endeavoring to conserve these communal values, God should be identified as the Creator of the community or the nation as at present constotuted and that the prophetic interpretation of God as Judge should be forgotten, and the necessity of redemption be ignored. But the risk must be taken. The present emphasis on the individual and individual salvation which tends to leave communal life to all intents and purposes untouched, is equally dangerous as is being amply demonstrated today in the West.

The papers in Section III discuss definite concrete relationships of the church to social situations in America. The church in any country has similar relationships. It is obviously impossible, however, to discuss the significance of this experience for the younger churches in any detail because each concrete situation is different. There are some things, however, which may be worthwhile saying.

The problem of the relation of the church to state controlled education is one that Christianity faces in many countries, and the basic elements of the situation are the same in most. Large bodies of students are educated in schools with a "non-religious orientation" or in some cases with an anti-religious orientation, and the "studied avoidance of religion (in the class-room) gives the unmistakable impression that it is a marginal interest." The growing secularization of life is consequently to be expected and the task which the church faces of Christianizing the whole of life becomes overwhelmingly difficult. The solution suggested for America viz.,- that religion be given its part in the education of children and youth so that the population may be "rendered religiously literate by the school", is probably not a practical solution for the countries where the younger churches are found. The situation is further complicated there by the presence of religious systems which are farther apart in their interpretation of what the inner meaning of religion is than are Catholic and Protestant Christians in America. In some countries, the integrating principle of life which is basic in public education is nationalism or nationalistic religion and this adds a further complication.

There is one thing, however, that should be clear in a discussion of this problem and that is that the church should not lightly give up any opportunities it may have for carrying on Christian schools, no matter how efficient, as education, government education may be. It is becoming increasingly evident today that Christian education is something quite distinctive from secular education. Indeed the clearer this becomes, the more difficult it is likely to be to carry on Christian schools in countries which tend toward totalitarianism, but the experience of America has shown that even in a country where the church is numerically strong, secular education tends to become not an ally of a religious interpretation of life but its antagonist. It is therefore imperative that we continue to maintain our Christian schools wherever practicable.





The question of the family is one of the utmost importance. The same forces that are playing upon family life in America as described here are, to a greater or less degree, bringing their influence to bear around the world. It is here perhaps more than anywhere else that the influence of secular individualism discussed above has been most evident. It is clear that today in America the family must be approached through the individual. This has its distinct values and this may be the way that the true Christian family is to be built in other countries. But in most of the countries where the younger churches are at work, it is still possible to build on the family as such. May it not be possible to conserve the best in the old family systems of the East and at the same time add those distinctive values which come from Christianity? One sentence in the paper is of special significance: "If the Christian movement had given as much attention to families as it has given to churches, its cause would be in a better way and we would now have better homes and better churches." It would seem evident from this that the younger churches would do well to give more attention to their relationship to the family than has been the case in America, if the Christian movement is to be firmly grounded and a better family life is to be secured.

Mr. Reisner's paper on "The Church and the Community" presents another aspect of the situation that contains much for the churches of Asia and Africa. There will be little disagreement with Mr. Reisner's basic position that Christianity in America has lost sight of the essential fact of the sacredness of all the relationships of life and as a consequence even the gifts of God in the land and in natural resources have come to be looked upon as purely economic factors to be exploited solely for what they will yield of economic value. Even such religious ceremonies as have survived from a more primitive time when the creative processes in nature were still mysterious and hence full of wonder and awe, have largely lost their earlier significance. It is a difficult task at this late day in a scientific age to recover this lost sense of the sacredness of the soil, and an appreciation of the religious significance of the creative processes of nature. It is not so easy to build anew that reverence for God's good gifts that will shrink from mere economic exploitation. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that Christianity as it takes its place amid the older cultures of Asia and Africa, should seek to conserve the religious significance of all of life, of personal and family events, of seedtime and harvest, of all that has to do with the God-given gifts of nature. Here and there there is indication in new ceremonies and new rituals that have been made use of that the younger churches are not unaware of this problem, but there will need to be a bolder attitude of experimentation if the Christian Church is to become in these countries a strong ally of a spiritual interpretation of all of life rather than an unconscious agent of a growing secularization.

Just how the Church is to function in relationship to society is discussed in Section II. The problem is one of maintaining the delicate balance between detachment from the concerns of social, political and economic life and absorption in this-worldly side; quite the contrary. As the cleavage between the Church and the world becomes sharper and more defined, the temptation to withdraw from this-worldly interests is becoming greater. To be sure, it may be necessary for the Church in some places to go into the catacombs for a time, but it is all the more necessary for a church that is so pressed to have deeply rooted in its life the compelling conviction that God demands control of the whole of life, lest it become an encysted group, absorbed in the problems of self nurture and self preservation.

This whole question, therefore, takes on, we believe, unusual importance for the Madras Conference and after Madras for the churches of the world.









